THE FIRST YEAR OF WAR

Many Americans say over and over again that we were treacherously attacked by Japan while minding our own business; and that we are fighting to punish Japan for her crime, and in order that we may not be enslaved or attacked again. We are fighting for revenge and peace. There is, of course, a question of whether you can have revenge and peace. That question is still a good while off. But if you talk further with the revenge and peace people you find that they are not at all enthusiastic about the war, in fact, quite downhearted about it. They think and say that after our men have been slain and our oil burned up and a good part of our iron blown into fragments, the best we can hope for is what we had before the war. They want that, of course, because we had more than anybody else in the world, but when they think of mass unemployment their hearts sink and they sometimes give you the impression that even revenge isn't worth it. And they should be discouraged because they have not understood either why the war came or we must fight it to a finish. They want to go back and crawl in a hole, and have everybody else in the world, the Chinese, the Russians, the English, the Hindus, the Germans, the Negroes, the Japanese, the French--everybody--do likewise. They are the Maginot Line people.

The war is now beginning to make sense, and if you follow the thinking of a man like E. H. Carr, in his book, "Conditions of Peace" you understand that this is not so much a war, certainly not a case of "crime and punishment", as it is a profound and world-wide change of the organizations of nations. This is the last war--its climactic phase. It is the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

The nineteenth century was the century of:

1. Exploitation of Asia by Europe.
2. Laissez-faire capitalism, and its political expression:
3. Democracy of and for the property-owner.
4. Individual success, conspicuous waste (see Veblen), emphasis on one's rights and privileges from one's country.
5. An economy dominated by the producer and organized labor.

We are now entering the twentieth century, which seems likely to be the century of:

1. Development of Asia by the Asiatics.
2. Controlled capitalism.
3. A democracy of the worker, or if not that, perhaps of a new privileged (not monied) class, the technical experts.
4. Group rather than individual success, with the emphasis rather on one's duties than on one's privileges.

We cannot have a modern industrial (factory) economy without some such changes. The lack of them has caused world-wide unemployment. Rich nations could postpone these changes by the plan of buying off the poor and jobless with the dole, P. W. A. etc. England could do it, the United

States could do it, Russia, Germany, Italy and Japan could not afford such a luxury. They were forced into experimentation and change their poverty. With considerable local differences, the poor nations all worked out a new plan: total organization. To their surprise and delight they found the new plan gave them extraordinary striking power and unity of effort. They felt strong.

This power was organized for war because the political barriers of the nineteenth century (as perpetuated and exaggerated by the treaty of Versailles) were obsolete and incompatible with a modern economy. But no adjustment was contemplated by France, England, Holland or the United States, who were interested in "preserving" peace, which meant clinging to their fortunate places. Of the totalitarian powers, only Russia organized for a war of self-defense, for, like the United States, she had no need to break down political barriers to attain an organization wide as a continent in tis scope and resources. Had it not been for this fact, the United States would now be, as one writer says, a German (or Japanese) colony. It is the most dramatic irony of our time that the United States should have been saved from conquest by the country which began the modern revolution against the type of organization we know best, the country which, above all others, we have hated and reviled. Suspicion of Germany and Japan by Russia (all the totalitarian countries agreed that England, France, Holland, and America were just an easy afternoon's work) took Germany into the Russian adventure, and prevented the complete conquest of China by Japan. It follows that the attack on Pearl Harbor was no more treacherous than any other military surprise. We had plenty of warning. It was the hand of the twentieth century knocking on the door. Like the German attack on Russia, it saved us.

The twentieth century is here, but not, as yet, for most Americans, who have their faces turned backward. This is an impersonal war: a war of ideas. It will be won by the countries who believe strongest in their own principles. It would seem that vast, continental organizations like America and Russia, are the coming thing. This is not a war of hates, or revenge. It is like a severe operation which we must see through in order that life may be healthy in the century to come.

What will it do to the Nisei? I'm afraid we cannot forsee that, yet. It seems likely to be favorable to minorities because of the demand for labor (likely to be a permanent one) and the rising power of the Asiatic peoples. I cannot feel despair; and I wish to add that I have never hadthe privilege of enjoying as friends so interesting and stimulating a group as the Nisei and their parents, who combine the old and the new in their lives in so many dramatic ways. It is one of my deepest hopes that I may never be deprived of their love or trust, and that the day may come soon when we may all enjoy our native land in a better century than the one which has ended.

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